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FINDINGS

OF THE

GENERAL CONFERENCE

OF THE

"AMERICAN MISSION,"

HELD AT

SCHUTZ, EGYPT,

APRIL 28th to MAY 5th, 1912.

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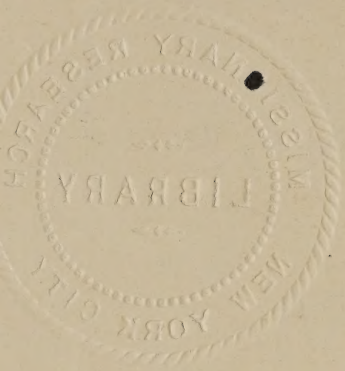
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Findings of the General Conference of the "American Mission,"

held at SCHUTZ, EGYPT, April 28th to May 5th, 1912.

A CONFERENCE of some sixty-five missionaries, connected with the American (United Presbyterian) Mission in Egypt, met at Schutz, near Alexandria, to consider in a broad and comprehensive way the missionary situation in the Nile Valley. The Conference continued through eight days. A carefully prepared program provided for the fullest and freest discussion of present-day missionary conditions, methods, and needs in Egypt. Sharing in the deliberations of the Conference were thirty men and thirty-five women under permanent appointment as missionaries to Egypt, together with the Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions in America, the Rev. Charles R. Watson, and also the Rev. Samuel M. Zwemer, of Arabia.

The following findings were adopted, by unanimous vote, as expressing the conclusions of the Conference after a careful study and extended discussions of the missionary situation in Egypt:—

I.

GRATITUDE TO GOD.

We, first of all, recognize anew and with deepest gratitude the goodness which God has shown to our Mission during the fifty-eight years of its history.

Feeble and small indeed were the beginnings of this undertaking more than a half-century ago, and weak and unworthy have been the human agencies at work during all these years, yet God by His blessing has granted successes and made achievements possible, altogether out of proportion to our human investments of life and of money, of time, talent, and equipment. From the standpoint of numbers, there is abundant ground for rejoicing as we survey to-day a work enlisting in its service eighty-seven missionaries and their wives, sixty-one native ordained ministers, five-hundred-and-nine teachers in schools and colleges, and one-hundred-and-sixteen other Christian workers, while over eleven-thousand communicants are to be found in our seventy-six organized congregations or their out-stations, and over seventeen-thousand are enrolled in our Sabbath schools. But more gratifying still than this growth in numbers is the development of the corporate life of the native Evangelical Church with its Synod and four presbyteries and with its progressive efforts towards self-support, self-government, and self-extension. To the corporate life of the Church there should be added as a ground for thanksgiving, the development of an institutional life which can only be the product of decades of growth, and which gives us to-day well-organized missionary institutions, both educational and medical. Neither is the great value of a missionary experience of almost six decades to be overlooked, for it is this experience that safeguards the value of both present and future efforts. Lastly, there is occasion for appreciating the prestige which the Mission has gained, with the Government on the one hand, and with the communities to which it ministers on the other hand,

because of its consistent policies of fairness and firmness. In all of these achievements and attainments we recognize the good hand of God as the real source of the blessing and power which have marked our labors.

II.

THE UNFINISHED TASK.

A careful survey of the field by districts has, however, brought an almost overwhelming consciousness of the greatness of the task which yet remains to be performed in the evangelization of Egypt. With all our progress and successes, there is in all Egypt but one Evangelical Christian Church member to every 58 Orthodox Copts, and to every 895 Mohammedans. In the city of Cairo, there is but one to every 83 Copts and to every 1201 Mohammedans, while in the Delta as a whole the proportion is but one Evangelical Christian Church member to every 341 Copts and to every 14,469 Mohammedans. The entire native Protestant community of Upper Egypt, communicants and adherents, could, so far as numbers is concerned, be crowded into four-fifths of the single town of Assiut, leaving a vast population of 4,626,260 yet to be reached; while the native Protestant community of Cairo and the Delta is less than the population of the small suburban town of Helwan, leaving 6,626,000 yet to be reached.

To this general need there are to be added special needs within certain clearly defined areas or classes. Among the 635,012 Bedouins of Egypt, there is practically no missionary work done. Of the 10,269,449 Mohammedans, it is not thought that the existing agencies of all Christian Missions in Egypt are reaching more than

1,000,000. Of 3,621 towns and villages, not more than 360 have any regular missionary work carried on in them. In the entire district of Behera with its 798,473 souls, there is only one native evangelist working regularly.

To occupy this field there must be a material increase in the number of workers, both native and foreign; the increase of American missionaries which is required, calls for a doubling of the present force within the next five years. To occupy the field, there must also be displayed the greatest possible wisdom both in missionary strategy and in the conservation of missionary resources, and there must be, above all, for the entire missionary enterprise the reinforcement of a spiritual revival and of a divine quickening.

III.

THE COPTIC CHURCH.

A study of the condition of the Coptic Church shows much ground for gratification in the signs of advancement which are discernible among many members of this ancient Oriental Church. An increasing use of Arabic in the church services in place of the unintelligible Coptic language, an increasing use of the Scriptures as a part of these services, the introduction of preaching or Bible exposition in some places, the opening of work for women and of schools for girls, and the moral stand and spirit of moderation displayed by the Coptic Congress, — these are among the encouraging signs of progress observed within the Coptic Church. It is to be recognized, however, that the progress noted is of an intellectual rather than of a

spiritual character, and that while the Coptic laity has revealed a spirit of progress, the Coptic hierarchy still remains for the most part indifferent to that which makes for the highest morality, spirituality and religious enlightenment. In many of the villages of the Delta and in some other sections of Egypt, the condition of the Coptic community is scarcely distinguishable from that of the Moslem community.

Toward this historic Church whose organization and membership invest it with tremendous possibilities of influence in the life of the Nation, if once it be reclaimed from errors of doctrine and practise and from deadness of life, we would express our profound interest and our deep Christian sympathy. While history has vindicated the wisdom of the founders of our Mission in establishing an Evangelical Church in Egypt and in gathering into it those spiritually enlightened and regenerated through the preaching of the Gospel, yet we declare again that it is a vital part of our Mission's policy to do everything possible to bring enlightenment and quickening to the Coptic Church so that, purified and baptized with power, it may once more become a vital force for the uplift of Egypt and for the extension of the Kingdom of God throughout the Nile Valley.

IV.

MOHAMMEDANISM.

Our survey of Islam in Egypt has brought to us a new sense of the immensity and of the seriousness of the task before us in making Christ known to this Moslem world. More than 91 per cent. of the population of Egypt is Moslem. Islam is, therefore, the supreme

problem of Missions in Egypt. A study, therefore, should be made to discover how all missionary effort and influence may be most definitely and effectively focused upon this central problem of Missions in Egypt, —Islam.

To such special effort in behalf of Moslems God is calling us not only by His assignment to us of a field in which Moslems preponderate so greatly, but also by doors of opportunity which His providence has opened up and by an era of responsiveness which has been ushered in through the manifest operations of His Holy Spirit. To-day as never before there is manifest among Moslems an interest in Christianity and its teachings. Copies of the Scriptures and religious tracts are being bought and read by Moslems to an extent unparallelled in the past history of Islam. A spirit of religious inquiry is manifest among many Moslems, even of those who are recognized as sheikhs or religious teachers. The attendance of Moslems is increasing in both the regular and special meetings held under Christian auspices. Requests for baptism on the part of Moslems are not infrequent. Two who were born Moslems may now be found in attendance at our Theological Seminary. Where, formerly, few Moslems were willing to listen to Christian teaching, now, few there are who refuse to listen when approached.

To an attitude of critical and often of sympathetic interest in Christianity, there must be added, as accentuating the present day opportunity for work among Moslems, a spirit of unrest in Moslem circles and an increasing effort to discover ways by which Islamic standards and practises, Islamic laws and institutions, may undergo such revision and reconstruction as will

enable them to retain the respect and command the allegiance of a Moslem public which is advancing in knowledge and enlightenment.

In these and in other operations of the Holy Spirit within the Moslem world of Egypt, there comes a call which is loud and clear, insistent and commanding, urging to immediate and more earnest effort to present to Moslems Him through Whom alone the Moslem world may be saved. In the enlarged and more aggressive missionary efforts which are to be put forth in behalf of Moslems, we recognize the advantage which may be gained by a specialized knowledge of the history, the doctrinal positions and the practises of Islam, but we would also emphasize anew the importance of a Christ-like love as the dominating motive and as the supremely effective method for work among Moslems.

V.

THE NATIVE EVANGELICAL CHURCH.

The Native Evangelical Church of Egypt represents a force for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ in the Nile Valley whose existence may well be the ground both for gratitude to God and for great hope for the future. The numerical strength of this Church may be appreciated when we remember that it has 76 organized congregations, 61 ordained ministers, 11,464 members, constituting a native evangelical community of some 30,000 souls. To this must be added a strength of organization, a thoroughness of indoctrination, a knowledge of the Scriptures and a commendable zeal for service, which give great assurance for the future. Recent spiritual movements, such as manifested them-

selves at the General Conference at Sanabo and the Women's Conference at Assiut, and a new development of interest in work for Moslems, afford great encouragement.

Nevertheless it is well to lay a new emphasis on the high ideals, as yet unattained, which we cherish for this Evangelical Church of Egypt. This Church should hold before it nothing less than a national ideal. That the unfortunate divisions of Western Christianity may not project themselves to this mission field, this Evangelical Church should seek to make itself worthy of representing for all Egypt that broad and evangelical faith which is based wholly upon the teachings of the Word of God, and that earnest passion for evangelism which will ever purify its life and justify its existence. It should set before it the high and noble ambition to be the National Evangelical Church of Egypt, not in any spirit of self seeking but in a triumphant faith in the high calling of God and the leadership of Christ the Head of the Church.

To develop and strengthen the Evangelical Church, the following needs are presented:—

(a) There is a most urgent need for the immediate assignment of two experienced American missionaries, (whose number should be increased as soon as possible to four) to the work of visiting the native pastors and their congregations for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a sympathetic contact between the Mission and the native Church, thus providing the native Church also with that spiritual leadership which it needs to enable it to realize its high calling, and thus placing also at the disposal of the native Church the very best which the Churches of the West have to offer in both spiritual truth and methods of Christian service.

(b) There is need for the development in the native Church of a more earnest spirit of evangelism. To this end students in the Theological Seminary might well be given one year or more of special practical training as evangelists under the guidance of an evangelistic missionary before they are thrust out into pastorates. Native Egyptian evangelists should be sought for, who may minister as evangelists to the organized congregations of Egypt. Special courses should be provided at Assiut or elsewhere, to give training in evangelistic methods to young men who are ready to serve as lay workers. Above all, that conception of the Christian life should be presented insistently and persuasively which claims every Church member as a missionary and lays upon all the obligation of bringing others to Christ.

(c) There is need also for the fullest cultivation of the spirit of liberality and of Christian stewardship in the native Church. To this end, the Church should be urged to become self-supporting as soon as possible and to undertake constantly enlarging home and foreign missionary operations. For the purpose of distinguishing between self-support and missionary effort, and to bring the latter into greater prominence, it seems wise to constitute separate funds for these two causes and to urge the appointment of a joint and yet independent Board of Missions, of Egyptians and Americans, to direct the missionary operations of the "mission fund;" representation upon this Board being on the basis of the amounts contributed to the fund by the native Church and by the American Mission respectively. It is also desirable that suitable and up-to-date methods of Church finance be introduced as rapidly as possible into all congregations and that American missionaries serve with

Egyptians upon Committees to which is entrusted this task of developing the spirit of liberality in the native Church.

(d) The supreme need of the native Church and of the entire missionary force is, however, a spiritual quickening such as can only come through a baptism of the Holy Spirit. Only so can life be purged of sin and become a powerful witness to the power of the Gospel. Only so can Church methods and machinery and organization thrill with life and power. Only so can friction be removed and the gap between Western and Eastern viewpoints be bridged. Only so can the spirit of evangelism be renewed and love for souls become a veritable passion. Only so can the Evangelical Church be willing to lay down its life, if need be, for the winning of Moslem Egypt to Christ. Only so can this Church be enabled to see and then to realize its high calling to become the National Evangelical Church of Egypt. A mighty spiritual revival is the supreme need of Egypt to-day.

VI.

EVANGELISTIC METHODS.

The evangelization of Egypt calls for the reinforcement of existing missionary work by the use of aggressive evangelistic methods which will project farther afield the influence of existing work and provide a more pervasive and diffusive form of missionary effort. This calls for not less than one evangelistic missionary for each district whose special duty it will be to press out into territories now untouched by regular missionary work and to develop, whether through workers of the

native Church or through independent workers, a force which will aim at the evangelization of Egypt. Naturally, the Moslems must constitute the chief objective in all such work, since they constitute more than nine-tenths of the whole population of the country. It is essential in this work that each evangelistic missionary regard himself as a general for the direction and inspiration of the forces at his disposal. By working with them, by directing their movements, by calling them in frequently to some center for conferences, and especially by giving himself personally to his workers for their inspiration and guidance, the evangelistic missionary will be able to best forward the special work committed to him.

Among subsidiary methods for promoting the work are the following:—A campaign of education as to the importance and methods of evangelism, to be carried on through the Church papers in Egypt; the promotion of special evangelistic meetings in the native congregations; the distribution by the missionary of carefully-selected leaflets or books on evangelism.

VII.

BOOK WORK.

Recent years having witnessed a remarkable advance in education, a corresponding increase of interest in reading has developed throughout the country. Unfortunately, this appetite for reading has been made the occasion for the extensive sale and circulation of a demoralizing and debasing type of literature, much of it consisting of translations of corrupting Western novels. There is every need for taking advantage of this public interest in books for the distribution of both moral and religious

works. To the time honored labors of the American Bible Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society in distributing the Scriptures, there are now added the most effective efforts of the Nile Mission Press which both produces and distributes moral and religious literature so prepared as to awaken popular interest. Whether through this agency or otherwise, there is need for the development of a far reaching and yet well directed and carefully supervised system of colportage which may be correlated with the evangelistic methods promoted in the several districts. To make this colportage work thoroughly effective, each missionary in charge of such work will need to become informed as to the character of available literature and also to keep abreast of new leaflets or books constantly appearing. In the cities and large centers, Reading Rooms should be opened, possessing social attractiveness and equipped with circulating libraries.

VIII.

WOMEN'S WORK.

A survey of our Mission field and work makes it necessary to lay a new emphasis upon the importance of women's work. The laws of seclusion placing the larger part of Egypt's womanhood beyond the reach of ordinary missionary agencies, the numerical importance of reaching this half of the country's population, the debasing influence of Moslem home and social conditions, the remarkable successes achieved in the past by work for women in Egypt and the almost unlimited opportunity which exists of entering Egyptian homes for purposes of instruction and evangelization,—unite in

making a powerful appeal for the immediate enlargement of women's work. A doubling of the present American woman missionary force is required to meet the present need and opportunity.

For the further development of Bible Women's Work, the following methods are proposed: that where their numbers will justify it, practical courses of training be provided for those now in service; that institutes for Bible women be held either independently or in conjunction with other Conferences; that an effort be made to enlist a few workers of the very highest standard who may help to raise the standard of both workers and work; that this work be dignified by higher salaries making possible better trained workers; that literature and courses be prepared for the guidance and help of Bible women; and, finally, that this work be presented to those graduating from our girls' schools and colleges as a work worthy of the best service of Christian womanhood.

For the development of work among women who are members or adherents of the Evangelical Church, it is indispensable that a special department be made of this work and that a General Secretary and at least three District or Presbyterial Secretaries be appointed. The *Huda*, the Arabic Church paper, should also be used to present methods and material for conducting women's prayer-meetings and missionary meetings. Mothers' meetings and sewing circles are also proposed. A supremely important and far reaching opportunity exists for the fullest development and use of volunteer women workers from our best Protestant families, such as have been produced through the spiritual impulses of the

Assiut Women's Conference. Such conferences as the latter are to be given the highest place as methods of influencing women for the service of Christ.

IX.

EDUCATIONAL WORK.

The following findings, presented by the Educational Conference held at Assiut, January 29th to February 2nd, 1912, are heartily endorsed as a result of a further survey of the educational situation at the General Conference at Schutz, April 29th to May 5th, 1912, and are embodied here as a part of the findings of this General Conference.

1. The importance and value of missionary educational work in the past have abundant witness borne to them not only within missionary circles but even outside these circles. The solid achievements of a half-century of missionary effort, the development of a native Evangelical Church with a stable and sturdy corporate life, the liberal provision of leaders for Christian work, the presence in all ranks of society of those either professing Christianity or favourable to it—these all are results traceable to the splendid work of missionary education in Egypt during the past. Abundant testimony is at hand also from public men, officials of experience and judgment in Egyptian educational affairs, setting forth the value and service to the nation rendered by missionary education in the Valley of the Nile. For this noble record of the past there is occasion for profound gratitude to God, and for a renewed appreciation of the services rendered by those whose lives are built into this record.

2. A study of the modern educational situation in Egypt reveals the fact that developments of far-reaching significance have taken place, affecting vitally the character, methods, and conditions of all educational work. The invasion of the East by Western ideas and learning has resulted in a modification of even the most conservative type of Moslem education—that of the Azhar. Dissolution or reformation seems imminent here. In more liberal circles, the passion for education continues unabated but seems to be crystallizing into certain definite educational moulds, following, unfortunately, the unelastic and narrow curriculum of the Government. This curriculum, prepared for civil service training, is commonly recognized as unsuitable for general and popular education, but its dominance over the entire educational life of Egypt so far as boys are concerned is now sweeping and almost absolute. Liberty still continues only in the education of girls. Meanwhile a new educational movement has appeared whose financial resources at least bespeak for it a great future. It is the system of education just being launched under the Provincial Councils. Its development has not yet proceeded far enough to make it possible to characterize it with definiteness or assurance. The drift from ancient Islamic traditions, the continued popular eagerness for education, the dominance of the Government curriculum and the rise of Provincial Councils' schools—these constitute the chief features of the present educational situation.

3. Weighing carefully the significance of recent educational changes and recognizing the exacting conditions of the modern educational world, we believe it to be the part of supreme strategy, first of all, to strengthen

existing missionary work. Phenomenal advances in education in Egypt will no longer tolerate moderate efficiency and inadequate equipment in educational work. Efficiency must be secured even at the sacrifice of enlargement of educational work. Quantity must be sacrificed, where necessary, to quality. No new school preparing for the present government primary or secondary certificates and dependent upon the Mission for support, with the exception of the Cairo Central Boys' School, should be developed, while existing schools should carefully determine the number of scholars which their staff and equipment will enable them to minister to efficiently and should refuse admittance to a greater number.

4. We recommend the institution of a system of school inspection with one inspector (or more) who shall be a missionary qualified by special training for this work and giving his whole time to this work of supervision. Co-operating in this work and in the development of an educational policy, there should be constituted a permanent General Educational Committee of the Mission with subordinate Committees for Upper and Lower Egypt. By an adequate system of school inspection, we believe (a) that greater teaching efficiency can be secured in our Christian Evangelical schools, (b) that missionaries in charge of districts will thus be relieved of technical school supervision and be set free for more direct evangelistic work in their schools, (c) that the educational work of the several districts will become more unified and better correlated, (d) that more efficient and scientific methods will be discovered and applied in our educational work, and (e) that a powerful impulse may be given also to schools under the care of the native Church.

(5) We also believe that there is an urgent need for teacher-training. This will call (a) for teacher-training courses at such schools as are now sending out teachers, (b) for the establishment ultimately of a strong teacher-training school at some suitable center, (c) for the organization of teachers' institutes or summer schools, and (d) for reaching teachers by correspondence giving to them suggestions and inspiration. To acquaint missionaries engaged in educational work with the best educational methods of the West, we believe further that provision should be made for special study on their part along these lines during their periods of furloughs.

6. To provide for the needs of the highest Christian education in Egypt, we believe that an institution of higher education should be established in the Delta, with a foundation and with resources making possible its development into a Christian University for the entire Valley of the Nile. Such an institution would, of course, meet immediate needs for higher Christian education in Cairo and the Delta, but more especially is it needed as a capstone to all Christian and missionary effort in the Nile Valley and to the extensive and well organized system of Christian education which exists in Egypt as a result of the past fifty years of American missionary effort. It is demanded by the total absence of any Christian University either in Egypt or in all Northern Africa. If adequately equipped, its establishment in Egypt and at Cairo—the educational centre of Islam—would be of strategic value to Christian missions throughout the world in connection with every effort to reach the Moslem world.

7. We believe that steps should be taken to discover some method of approaching the Government success-

fully to urge that in the educational system of Egypt the Christian Sabbath be permitted to Christians and that some provision be made in the Government curriculum for a broader and more elastic training than that now presented in the secondary curriculum. We also believe that Provincial Councils should be approached to urge upon them the granting of suitable educational privileges to native Christians or the giving of aid to native Christian schools. We also believe that steps should be taken to secure closer co-operation with the liberal Coptic leaders in the development of Christian education, and in the introduction of Sabbath Schools in connection with Coptic Schools.

8. In view of the almost complete absence of vital Christian instruction in non-mission schools of Egypt, we believe that a new emphasis should be placed upon religious and moral instruction in our Mission schools. (a) The observance of the daily hour for religious instruction should be safe-guarded. (b) A suitable curriculum with suitable text-books for the religious instruction of the several grades should be worked out. (c) The teaching of moral maxims and religious truth should be accomplished by methods putting such maxims and truth into practice. (d) A careful use should be made of every possible method for exerting a wholesome moral and religious influence outside of the class hour, as by the Sabbath School, the Christian Endeavor, the church services, the missionary society, social service, contact with the home, civic improvement and benevolence.

X.

MEDICAL WORK.

In our survey, medical work has revealed itself to be an agency of peculiar effectiveness in missionary work among Moslems both in opening doors for other forms of work and in itself witnessing by word and deed to the spirit and power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition to existing work and for its reinforcement and enlargement, a system of medical itineration should be developed both in the Delta and in Upper Egypt.